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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

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ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1978.....Sy Pranger has been designated as the official responsible for administering the Ethics Act in USDA. Current OP activity under the Act includes:

- Financial Disclosure Statements - Employees in GS-16 and above or equivalent positions, or in Schedule C positions, must file detailed reports of their financial interests upon appointment to or termination from such positions and annually while so employed. Appointment and termination reports have been requested from all who entered or left covered positions since January 1, 1979. Requests for the annual reports have been prepared awaiting receipt of the forms from the Office of Government Ethics (OGE). The requests are expected to be issued during the week of April 16.
- Post-Employment Restrictions on Senior Employees - The two new restrictions on post-Federal employment activity apply to all Executive Level positions as of July 1, 1979, but they will not apply to GS-16 through 18 positions if exempted by OGE. We are now canvassing the agencies to prepare recommendations for OGE exemptions. The restrictions on GS-16 through 18 employees will not take effect before October 1, 1979, and all employees will be advised if the restrictions apply to them.

(Contact: Bill Riley, OP; ext. 77654)

SAFETY AND HEALTH STANDARDS IN BUILDINGS.....The General Services Administration has recently taken steps to insure that buildings occupied by Federal employees are maintained in a safe and healthy condition. GSA reports that 92 buildings have recently been vacated because of failure to meet criteria established. One of these was a 28 story building.

As part of this program, the Commissioner of Region 3, Public Buildings Service, has requested that building managers report all existing safety and health problems and all new problems that cannot be resolved in 30 days.

This special emphasis by GSA resulted from a report by the President's Inter-agency Task Force on Workplace Safety and Health. This report expressed concern about unresolved safety and health related problems which had been formally brought to the attention of GSA management. As part of this effort, OSHM is working with O&F to identify and report to GSA all new or continuing unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. (Contact: Phil Mueller, OSHM, 472-4305)

PART-TIME CAREER EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1978.....The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has issued interim regulations and instructions on the definition and use of part-time employment under Public Law 95-437. The regulations became effective April 8, 1979. Part-time employment is defined as "regularly scheduled work of from 16 to 32 hours per week performed by career employees." It does not apply to employees under temporary, intermittent, or term appointments.

The law permits agencies to make exceptions from its part-time employment program in order to carry out the agency mission. Exceptions may provide for employment of part-time workers for less than 16 hours per week, if necessary, to carry out its mission. Agencies may not make exceptions to employ part-time workers for more than 32 hours per week. Also excepted from the law are positions at GS-16 (or equivalent) and above and positions where a collective bargaining agreement establishes the number of hours of employment per week.

Agencies will be required to set annual goals for establishing and converting positions for part-time career employment and a timetable for achieving such goals. Semi-annual progress reports to OPM will be required.

Effective October 1, 1980, personnel ceilings will be determined on a fractional basis, i.e., an employee working on a part-time basis shall be counted as a fraction which will be determined by dividing 40 hours into the average number of hours of the employee's regularly scheduled workweek. (Contact: Patricia J. Killen, ext. 72435)

INTERAGENCY AUDITOR TRAINING PROGRAM.....Secretary Bergland has signed a Memorandum of Understanding placing the Interagency Auditor Training Program in the Department of Agriculture. USDA will rely on the Graduate School to carry out the provisions of the Memorandum which concern the operation of interagency training programs for all Federal, State, and local government audit personnel. Under Executive Order 11348, the Office of Personnel Management (formerly Civil Service Commission) is responsible for promotion and coordination of interagency training programs, including the designation of lead agencies. (Contact: Preston Davis, SEC, ext. 73881)

HANDICAPPED REGULATIONS.....The public comment period on proposed USDA regulations to implement Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 closes April 23. This section prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicap in Federal programs and activities. Agencies administering programs are asked to encourage program recipients to take advantage of this opportunity to comment on the proposed regulations. (Contact: Teresa Cunningham, OEO, ext. 75114)

DEPOSITS IN MINORITY-OWNED BANKS.....First quarter FY 1979 USDA deposits in minority-owned banks totaled \$3,060,239, reflecting an increase of over \$1 million from last quarter's report. USDA agencies are encouraged to continue to support these banks. (Contact: Paul J. McCloskey, OEO, ext. 77921)

ASIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE WEEK.....President Carter has proclaimed May 4-10 as "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week" in recognition of the fact that "Asian Americans have played a significant role in the creation of a dynamic and pluralistic America, with enormous contributions to science, arts, industry, government and commerce." Agencies are encouraged to observe this period with appropriate ceremonies and activities. (Contact: James Frazier, OEO, ext. 74256)

PROFESSIONAL PROPERTY MANAGERS.....The O&F, Administrative Services Director Professional Steering Committee chaired by Harold G. Franklin, Chief, Personal Property Management Division of O&F, has been actively seeking ways to bring a higher degree of professionalism into the Administrative Services functions of the Department. For the past six months, Mr. Franklin has been working with Mr. Frank Proden of HEW to establish a local chapter of the National Property Management Association. A very successful membership drive has been conducted and as of April 6, 1979, the new chapter has been successful in recruiting 81 members, 19 of whom are USDA employees. New members are completing resumes of their work experience to forward to the National Association's certification board. Qualified individuals approved by the certification board will be issued certificates as "Certified Professional Property Managers" or "Certified Professional Property Specialists." Individuals who apply for membership after June 1, 1979, will be required to go through a testing program in order to obtain certification. (Contact: Harold Franklin, O&F, ext. 73141)

CASH MANAGEMENT.....Treasury has given final approval to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) operating procedure and agreement to be used by participating States in the Richmond pilot test of the Treasury Financial Communication System - Letter of Credit (TFCS-LOC). This test involves the electronic transfer of FNS program payments to grantees. Representatives from FNS, Treasury and the Office of Operations and Finance are to meet with representatives from the FNS Regional Office, the State of North Carolina and the Eastern Band Cherokee Indians the first week in May to review the procedures prior to beginning the project. Plans are to meet with Maryland and Washington, D.C. representatives at a later date to discuss their possible participation in the pilot project. An evaluation will be performed between the sixth and ninth months of the project.

If this pilot test is successful, the TFCS-LOC system is expected to have government-wide application. (Contact: Bill Fuchs, O&F, ext. 75630)

STANDARDIZATION OF COMPUTER APPLICATIONS.....With the installation of a new computer at the Department's Fort Collins Computer Center, the Forest Service will be upgrading all of their computer applications to meet national standards for documentation and programming. As part of this upgrading, the Forest Service will adopt a uniform naming convention to aid in monitoring applications use. An effort will also be made to improve the efficiency of systems through the use of software performance evaluation techniques. (Contact: Glenn Haney, FS, ext. 76707)

MORATORIUM ON MOTOR VEHICLE ACQUISITIONS AND REPLACEMENT.....Secretary's Memorandum No. 1957, dated September 25, 1978, imposed a moratorium on acquisition and replacement of motor vehicles and directed that an analysis be conducted of motor vehicle needs and uses in the Department. The task force of O&F and agency representatives established at that time has now completed its report and copies have been distributed to Assistant Secretaries for review and comment.

Under provisions of this memorandum, the Assistant Secretary for Administration is authorized to grant exceptions to the moratorium on a case-by-case basis under the following categories:

1. Replacement of vehicles damaged beyond economical repair in accidents.
2. Replacement of vehicles where maintenance costs equal or exceed the original cost of the vehicles.
3. Replacement of 10% of the fleet that has reached or exceeded normal replacement standards.
4. Acquisition of vehicles to meet new mission requirements.

Exemption requests must be accompanied by the Agency Administrator's certification that actions have been initiated to meet the following conditions:

1. Use of privately owned vehicles (POV) is authorized only if it is the least expensive means of transportation available to meet program requirements, and this decision is based on a case-by-case analysis.
2. Plans are being developed and implemented to promote vehicle sharing and pooling within the Agency and agencies with vehicles are publishing schedules for other agencies in that immediate area listing times when vehicles can be made available for sharing.
3. USDA-owned, commercially-leased and, when economical, GSA-leased vehicles in our existing fleet are being utilized to the maximum extent possible within the Agency.
4. Sedans and station wagons eligible for replacement because of age only that have averaged less than 6,000 miles per year are not being replaced with new vehicles, but other means are being found (POV or vehicle sharing) to fulfill those program requirements, unless otherwise justified to meet specific mission requirements. These vehicles are being removed from the fleet, i.e., traded in or reassigned elsewhere.
5. Sedans and station wagons averaging less than 6,000 miles per year, and not eligible for replacement, are being reassigned to high POV drivers, unless justified as in Item 4.
6. Items 4 and 5 above also are being done for 4x2 light trucks averaging less than 4,000 miles per year.
7. High POV drivers getting 17 cents per mile are being examined to determine if reassignment of vehicles or some other alternate method of cheaper transportation can be identified.

It is anticipated that the conditions recommended above will lead to a reduction of overall vehicle requirements. If these guidelines aimed at better fleet utilization are followed, substantial reduction in fleet and POV costs can be achieved. Calculations indicate that by adhering to the conditions established, the Department will reduce 1979 acquisitions by 1,644 vehicles from the total FY'79 funding of 7,000 vehicles. (Contact: Harold Franklin, O&F, ext. 73141)